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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe ..... (Jamaica)

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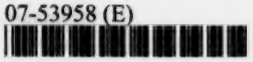

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 63: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/38, A/62/177, A/62/202 and A/62/290)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/62/173, A/62/201 and A/62/188)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/62/178)

1. **Ms. Carvalho** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that 2007 had been a year of reinforcing commitments and reflecting on strategic goals for the advancement of gender equality. Referring to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, she said that the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in July 2007 had been an occasion to take stock of that Committee's achievements and to assess how much remained to be accomplished. For instance, it was disappointing that only 88 countries were parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention. The European Union called on States parties to withdraw all reservations that were incompatible with the Convention and urged any States that had not yet ratified, acceded or succeeded to the Convention and the Optional Protocol to do so. The European Union also called on States parties that had not yet done so to take steps for a speedy acceptance of the 1995 amendment to the Convention regarding the Committee's meeting time.

2. In 2007, which had been designated "European Year of Equal Opportunities for All", several activities had been launched on the themes of rights, representation, recognition and respect and tolerance with a view to raising public awareness of gender issues. In the European Union, girls currently outperformed boys academically, but a gender pay gap of 15 per cent persisted. Moreover, 2007 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. Progress in achieving gender equality in the European Union had been achieved through equal treatment legislation, gender mainstreaming, specific measures and programmes, social dialogue and civil society participation. The European Parliament had been an active partner in that development, especially through its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

3. In early 2007, a European Commission Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation had introduced a new approach to development cooperation. The Communication stressed the need to tackle systematically the constraints on the achievement of gender equality and stated that broadening its scope beyond the social sectors was of particular importance. It provided guidelines on gender mainstreaming; proposed a list of measures regarding governance, employment, economic activities, education, health and combating gender-based violence; and described ways of promoting gender equality through budget support and sector-wide measures.

4. At a special Ministerial conference on gender equality held in Istanbul in November 2006, the members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership had agreed on a five-year framework of action for the promotion of gender equality in the civil, political, social, economic and cultural spheres. Progress would be evaluated on an annual basis. In 2005, the European Commission had adopted a proposal to create a "European Institute for Gender Equality" designed to consolidate European gender-equality policies. Having already established indicators on other priority areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, the European Union was currently in the process of adopting indicators on women and poverty. The Trio Presidency of the European Union had signed a Declaration reaffirming gender equality as a fundamental principle of the European Union and stressing that the European Pact for Gender Equality and the European Commission's Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men were complementary.

5. With a view to the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the European Union supported the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, and affirmed its commitment to the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held at Cairo in 1994, the

"ICPD+5 Key Actions" and the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Expanding access to information and services in the area of sexual and reproductive health was essential to implementing those programmes and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Training and the exchange of good practices in gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and gender impact assessment were crucial, as those tools were essential to decision-making. The European Union supported the new gender architecture proposed in the report of the High-Level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence and advocated the establishment of a new gender entity that would combine the normative and analytical functions of the existing architecture with a technical, policy-setting and programming role.

6. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM aligned itself with the statement made by the delegation of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Gender equality and the empowerment of women were crucial to democracy and sustainable development. Obstacles to women's empowerment included poverty; entrenched attitudes, practices and stereotypes; and unequal access to economic resources. To overcome such obstacles, the entire international community should act in a spirit of partnership. Guided by framework agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem do Para Convention) and the MDGs, Governments across the region had implemented legislative and structural reforms aimed at gender equality. Progress had been made especially in the areas of education and women's participation in politics and decision-making. However, challenges persisted, particularly in relation to violence against women, HIV/AIDS and poverty. Accordingly, the CARICOM secretariat, in cooperation with women's affairs bureaux, had earmarked gender-based violence, health-related activities and development issues as priority matters to be addressed in the period 2007-2008.

7. Regarding violence against women, in 2006 the CARICOM secretariat and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had conducted a feasibility study on possible mechanisms for raising public awareness of the issue. The study had shown that violence against women was pervasive in the region regardless of education level, class or ethnicity. The Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) on Gender and Development, which included representatives of Governments, United Nations bodies and regional non-governmental organizations (NGOs), would meet in November 2007 to discuss, inter alia, appropriate mechanisms comprehensively to promote advocacy and political recognition of that issue. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) had conducted a series of awareness-raising campaigns in the region regarding various aspects of trafficking in persons, which particularly affected women and girls. Some States had enacted relevant legislation and others were in the process of doing so. CARICOM welcomed United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, launched in early 2007. Lastly, enhancement of women's decision-making role in the public and private sectors was instrumental to success in that area. Some CARICOM States were close to or had attained the relevant targets endorsed by the Economic and Social Council.

8. With regard to health, HIV/AIDS had a disproportionate effect on women and posed a serious threat to the full enjoyment of women's right to a high standard of physical and mental health. CARICOM Governments were committed to combating the spread of that epidemic. However, the magnitude of the problem required international assistance to ensure sustainability. The Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP), the main regional mechanism engaged in those efforts, emphasized awareness raising, de-stigmatization of the epidemic and enhanced access to treatment and support. The CARICOM Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases, held in Trinidad and Tobago in September 2007, had agreed to take into account the gender dimension in all programmes concerning such illnesses.

9. Concerning development, he noted that UNIFEM played a central role in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. In any deliberations on a new gender architecture, due prominence should be given not only to normative and advocacy aspects, but also to issues of development, operational activities and adequate resources. The celebration of World Rural Women's Day, the theme of which was "The right to food: rural women produce and provide", should serve

as a reminder that women, who accounted for more than a quarter of the world's population but only owned 2 per cent of the land and received 1 per cent of agricultural loans, should be granted greater access to land, credit and other required resources as part of agricultural development and the promotion of food security.

10. **Mr. del Rosario Cebalos** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that, in the light of their own diversity, the countries that made up the Group recognized women's historical contribution to democracy, human rights, gender equality, social justice, development, food security, the inclusion of peoples who had been historically and socially excluded and the preservation of the environment. Since poverty and unequal access to the region's resources continued to be an obstacle to gender equality, the elimination and reduction of political, economic, social, and cultural disparities should be main objectives of all development proposals. Economic and social development required comprehensive social security systems capable of guaranteeing, inter alia, women's well-being, quality of life and status.

11. In view of those objectives, the judicial frameworks of the Group's members had been updated on the basis of international and regional agreements and through national initiatives. The work of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women had primarily consisted of the formulation, design and implementation of gender equality policies at the highest levels of the region's States. Although the contribution of civil society, including NGOs and grass-roots communities was essential, the main responsibility for guaranteeing the human rights of women, young girls and adolescents lay with States. Public debate in the region focused on such subjects as eradication of violence against women, particularly domestic violence; recognition of their right to have access to reproductive health services; and the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women. The development of gender-disaggregated statistical data in the region was essential to the design of programmes and to the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in immigration policies and Government budgets. International cooperation was an essential complement to national efforts to broaden the scope of such measures with a view to eradicating poverty; ensuring access to health services, especially in view of the feminization of HIV/AIDS; implementing comprehensive social security systems and eliminating violence against women, including domestic violence and trafficking in persons.

12. A more cohesive and strategic approach was necessary to achieve sufficient international visibility of existing challenges and bring about significant change. In that connection, the Group welcomed resolution A/61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and supported the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem do Para Convention). UNIFEM, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women played a key role in supporting government efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Group invited the Secretary-General fully to support the proper functioning and revitalization of INSTRAW and its interaction with other agencies of the United Nations system, in accordance with their respective mandates. Member States should make voluntary contributions to the Institute's core budget.

13. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to the human rights of indigenous women, including the right to development; the right to improvement of their social and economic conditions; the right to educate their children within their own culture, language and traditions; and the right to live in peace and security. The process of system-wide coherence within the United Nations should reflect the needs of the developing countries and the requirement for consistency and coordination within the system. In view of the feminization of poverty, it was necessary to increase economic opportunities for women to ensure their participation in decision-making related to the control of resources. Regarding South-South cooperation on the advancement of women, the Rio Group hailed the first Iberoamerican conference on gender and social cohesion, held in Santiago, Chile, in October 2007.

14. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that Colombia consistently took the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination

of Discrimination against Women into account in the formulation of its policies and strategies with respect to women. Having signed the Convention in 1982 and ratified the Optional Protocol in 2007, Colombia had presented its combined fifth and sixth periodic report in January 2007, providing a detailed assessment of progress made in the advancement of women and the challenges that remained.

15. The national development plan covering the period 2006 to 2010 guaranteed continuity in the implementation of effective strategies such as the policy on affirmative action, which gave priority to the achievement of goals in employment and business development, education and culture, political participation and the prevention of violence against women. A strategic plan for the protection of women's rights included more than 100 measures to be applied by various public authorities in order to protect women in areas ranging from domestic violence to discrimination in the labour market.

16. The adoption of gender mainstreaming policies by all State agencies had led to the development of a series of laws, jurisprudence and public policies with a gender perspective and the consolidation of sex-disaggregated information systems. Within the Social Reactivation Policy, four structural strategies promoted greater gender equality: human capital development and employment; consolidation of the social protection system; the network for comprehensive attention to the population living in extreme poverty and the promotion of microcredit.

17. Due to a number of factors, including new legislation on quotas, the representation of women in public office continued to grow steadily. As a result of an agreement to encourage diversity and inclusion signed by the political parties, women could expect to occupy a greater number of elected posts in the municipalities and departments in elections scheduled for October 2007.

18. Female-headed households in rural areas were particularly vulnerable to poverty. In response, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development had implemented a social management policy, which included programmes to support rural microenterprises, productive partnerships, a Development Fund for Rural Women and special consideration to women in subsidy programmes for rural housing and land reform. Nevertheless, in order to improve its results, international cooperation should be strengthened in the area of poverty reduction, including actions aimed at rural women.

19. The report of the Secretary-General (A/62/177) contained meaningful recommendations on violence against women migrant workers. As a State party to the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and as a country of origin for migrants, Colombia valued the efforts of the United Nations in promoting broader ratification of that Convention, especially by the main destination countries, in order to strengthen guarantees for the rights of migrant women.

20. Colombia also took note of the report on the activities of UNIFEM (A/62/188) and recognized its contribution to institutional strengthening at the national level in the areas of women and gender. The Fund had contributed to the incorporation of a gender perspective into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Colombia, adopted in July 2007. The Government also attached special importance to the work of INSTRAW and believed it was essential for INSTRAW to be included in the United Nations discussions on gender architecture. Through effective and coordinated cooperation, the United Nations could help Member States to strengthen national structures to advance the cause of women and to promote poverty eradication and the achievement of other MDGs. The discussions on gender architecture should fully diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of the system and seek to strengthen cooperation with States. Open and inclusive intergovernmental consultations and agreement among States on that issue were primary conditions to ensure that the proposed model would be regarded as legitimate and effective.

21. **Ms. Al-Mansour** (Qatar) said that many gains and successes had been accomplished for Qatari women as a result of the constant efforts dedicated to their empowerment, their role in development and their participation in all walks of life. Qatar's overall approach to those issues was that the advancement of women went hand in hand with the advancement of all family members. Its new five-year national strategy for the family therefore incorporated a specific plan designed to enhance the status of women by empowering and promoting their role in society, bearing in mind the equal rights and obligations of men and women enshrined in the Qatari Constitution.

22. As it was, the situation of Qatari women had already improved within a very short space of time; they now had the right to vote and stand in elections, for instance, and occupied influential positions of leadership, including as ministers, particularly in areas relating to the family, women and children. Top posts in universities and in investment and policymaking bodies were also held by women, a situation that was moreover set to continue, not least in view of the new tendency for women to be armed with education qualifications. On account of such developments, women's concerns were expected to assume higher priority than was previously the case in all policies, plans and programmes. Women were additionally moving away from more traditional occupations and into the economic, governmental and non-governmental sectors. A standing electoral commission had also been formed with the aim of promoting women's participation as both candidates and voters in the next parliamentary elections. Qatar in fact supported all efforts designed to further the effective participation of women overall in the interests of social development.

23. **Ms. Graham** (South Africa) said that in assessing progress in gender equality and the advancement of women, the General Assembly should first recognize how much further it had to go before achieving full empowerment and gender equality. Poverty, underdevelopment and all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls were among the remaining challenges. The international community should continue to work in partnerships to implement programmes to push back the frontiers of poverty and underdevelopment in rural and urban areas and progress more swiftly towards gender equality in society as a whole. Men and boys played an important role in that regard.

24. Since the establishment of democracy in 1994, the Government of South Africa had endeavoured to create a truly non-racial and non-sexist society. Great strides had been made in promoting equal representation of women at all levels of Government, largely through the work of the Office on the Status of Women and the Commission on Gender Equality. Gender parity in primary and secondary education had been achieved, and a gender perspective had been mainstreamed in development by ensuring that women were integrally involved in the design and implementation of development projects and programmes.

25. South Africa was committed to assisting the African Union in establishing continental structures for development; it had worked within the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to strengthen regional economic integration and through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to expedite development by harnessing skills and resources in the pursuit of common goals. It was a key challenge to transform those activities into economic growth and development for the benefit of women and to guarantee the means and opportunity for them to make a contribution.

26. South Africa was also active in peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives for conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. In the process of implementing those initiatives, the Government of South Africa ensured that women were not marginalized, but that they held their rightful place at all stages of conflict resolution and in all spheres of life.

27. Although much progress had been made in facing the challenges of promoting the status of women and gender equality at the national level, there was also a need to enhance international cooperation and global partnership, and to realize the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other international commitments. Commitments with respect to official development assistance (ODA) and debt relief must be honoured since such resources were critical to the elimination of gender disparities and violence against women and girls.

28. **Ms. Abdelhak** (Algeria) said that although the situation of women had improved in some countries, overall it remained inferior to that of men. Violence against women affected the physical and mental health of victims and was an impediment to equality and social cohesion. The protection of the rights of women had attracted increasing attention, but violence against women had barely declined. The Government of Algeria was determined to combat violence against women through legal provisions that protected them and criminalized sexual harassment. In cooperation with civil society, it had also formulated a national strategy aimed at mobilizing the resources needed to protect women and raise public awareness.

29. Outlining a number of measures designed to promote the emancipation of women in Algeria, she stressed that the process of bringing national legislation in line with the provisions of international instruments was a top priority. In the area of education, she said that in less than a generation, equal access to education at all levels had been achieved, and the enrolment of girls now exceeded that of boys at secondary and higher levels. The gap between the participation of men and women in the workforce and wage discrepancies had gradually narrowed, as women had become increasingly better educated, more widely represented in key areas of public service, including education, medicine and the judiciary, and in business ventures. In addition, the Government actively encouraged rural women to enhance their economic and social influence through broader participation.

30. **Mr. Pham Hai Anh** (Viet Nam) said that his delegation had noted with appreciation the intensification of efforts by various entities of the United Nations system to combat violence against women, in particular through the timely establishment of the United Nations Task Force on Violence against Women and the launch of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. He endorsed the Secretary-General's global campaign on violence against women, and said that the in-depth study on violence against women remained as relevant as ever. Concerted and unswerving efforts must be undertaken comprehensively to address that challenge.

31. The twelfth session of the Vietnamese National Assembly was currently discussing various provisions of a draft law on domestic violence with a view to preventing and punishing acts of domestic violence, particularly those perpetrated against women and children. The draft law also sought to protect and assist victims of violence, with due consideration given to elaboration of long-term solutions.

32. As defined in the 2006 Law on Gender Equality, gender mainstreaming was implemented through the policies and activities undertaken by all Government bodies. In recognition of the fact that gender equality and the advancement of women were crucial elements in the nation's socio-economic development, Viet Nam's comprehensive approach to poverty reduction and growth had been the most gender responsive strategy to date, and the current socio-economic development plan was the first of its kind to incorporate gender perspectives. Based on the national strategy and the five-year national plan of action for the advancement of women, the Government ministries and agencies in 64 provinces were elaborating local plans of action in order to reach national targets. The committees for the advancement of women, established in all ministries, agencies and local government bodies, were actively advising and assisting the heads of those agencies to mainstream gender perspectives.

33. Vietnamese women continued to play an active and important role in decision-making processes at all levels, comprising 25.76 per cent of deputies of the National Assembly and over 23 per cent of members of People's Councils at the provincial and district levels.

34. In order to achieve gender equality and the advancement and socio-economic development of women, particular attention should be paid to women in especially difficult situations, including women in rural areas. The plan of action on the advancement of women aimed at reducing the proportion of poor female-headed households by 50 per cent by providing access to loans under the national poverty reduction programme and ensuring access to loans from the social policy bank. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development had taken steps to coordinate the efforts of agencies, organizations and individuals to achieve gender equality in all aspects of rural life. In parallel with the national trend, women in rural areas were becoming increasingly active in making decisions for themselves and their communities.

35. Providing for the basic needs of rural women, such as access to infrastructure, land, finance, health care and education, continued to be accorded high priority in various norms, programmes and projects devised by the Government. The goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly would become a reality for women everywhere only if consistent and concerted efforts were undertaken at all levels, with due consideration to women in special circumstances.

36. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that the advancement of women was critical, not only as a fundamental human rights issue, but also as a precondition for successful peacebuilding, sustainable progress in the global fight against poverty and the general health and well-being of all peoples. It was disappointing that despite some progress, full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and

Platform for Action continued to fall short of commitments. The international community must remain vigilant and active in its efforts in favour of women's rights and gender equality.

37. He renewed Iceland's commitment to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, and said that the Committee monitoring its implementation had made a meaningful contribution to the promotion of equality worldwide. The work of the Commission on the Status of Women was also commendable, and he looked forward to upcoming discussions on key issues in financing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

38. The United Nations played a central role in addressing violence against women through global advocacy, leadership and its operational work at the national and regional levels. In that context, his delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/62/201, on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, and the attention paid to the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women.

39. He underscored the importance of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, and said that his Government was drafting an action plan to integrate that resolution into the policy and work methods of the Icelandic Crisis Response Unit.

40. In order for the United Nations to make an effective contribution to the advancement of women and gender equality, it must be able to play its normative and operational role in a coherent and coordinated manner. Iceland therefore welcomed the establishment of the Inter-Agency Network for Women and Gender Equality in the hope that greater and more coherent focus would be placed on the importance of empowerment and gender equality. However, Iceland still believed that the existing United Nations structures and approaches to gender issues were fragmented and did not appropriately reflect the importance of the matter at hand. His Government supported the establishment of a new gender entity to strengthen the performance of the United Nations in that regard. His delegation hoped that an Under-Secretary-General responsible for gender equality would soon be appointed in order to enhance leadership and coordination of gender issues within the system.

41. Experience had shown that there were strong links between women's empowerment and poverty reduction. The advancement of women and their rights should therefore be a central theme in all development efforts aimed at poverty eradication. That approach was duly reflected in Iceland's development cooperation policy, which attached central importance to the advancement of women. UNIFEM had been a key partner in that regard. He was therefore pleased to announce that the Government of Iceland would double its current contribution to the Fund, representing a thirty-fold increase in Iceland's contribution to UNIFEM since 2003 and ranking Iceland among the top donors to the Fund.

42. **Mr. Rachkov** (Belarus) said that gender equality and increasing the rights of women was a priority for his Government. Belarus had already carried out two five-year plans of action to promote gender equality and was embarking on a third. Particular attention was being given to improving the situation of women at the workplace and to promoting the employment of women in areas traditionally reserved for men, especially in Government and senior corporate management. Women already held powerful positions in the Presidential administration, the Parliament, large companies and other institutions. Civil society, including some 20 women's organizations, was also actively involved in eliminating discrimination against women. Given the 1 per cent unemployment rate in Belarus, women had relatively little trouble finding employment. However, his Government was facing the challenge of bridging the income gap between men and women; women earned on average 80 per cent as much as men. Nevertheless, women enjoyed a high level of education and were well represented in institutions of higher education and the sciences.

43. His Government also gave special attention to reproductive health. It had the lowest infant mortality rate in the CIS, and its rate of maternal mortality was in keeping with that of developed countries. It was making robust efforts to combat trafficking in women and children and provided assistance to the victims of such trafficking. Legislation had been enacted to provide for their safety and rehabilitation. The State bore the main responsibility for providing medical, psychological and social support to victims of trafficking, as international and non-governmental

organizations were not capable of doing so on their own. Belarus called for greater coordination of international efforts to combat human trafficking. It urged Member States to begin drafting a strategy to combat that modern form of slavery and stood ready to contribute to that important undertaking.

44. **Ms. Banna** (Iraq) said that women's rights were a main issue of international concern and were enshrined in various international instruments, yet discrepancies between the rights of women and men persisted worldwide. In the case of Iraq, few concrete results had been achieved in the past few years owing to the exceptional circumstances and successive conflicts which it had experienced. Iraqi women now had a broader base of participation in public life, however, involved as they were in political power and decision-making as parliamentarians and from ministerial positions. Moreover, with the establishment of the country's first effective women's organizations, they had been able to prove their worth and their capacity to meet challenges through their assumption of important responsibilities. Those organizations had played an active role in women's advancement by developing gender-analysis skills and gender-mainstreaming tools, as well as by assisting the relevant national institutions better to serve the cause of women and families.

45. In Iraq's current reconstruction phase, women assumed and aspired to ever greater responsibilities, which demanded not only their empowerment but also freedom from threats to their security and enjoyment of their inalienable rights. The Iraqi Government was therefore assiduously reviewing all laws and legislation, in particular those relating to women, to take account of the change in society. She called on all regional and international organizations to support women's institutions in Iraq and give priority to programmes that included components for the advancement of Iraqi women.

46. **Ms. Vikør** (Norway) said that her delegation welcomed initiatives to improve statistics on gender discrimination and strategies for its elimination. It therefore welcomed and supported the establishment of the gender, institutions and development database by the Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

47. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women must have the necessary tools to fulfil its mandate. The Committee itself had taken significant steps to enhance its working methods over the years. However, it would not be able to deal with an ever-increasing workload without being given the necessary time and the option of working in parallel groups. Her delegation commended the Committee on clearing much of its backlog, which would enable it to focus on States which had not yet submitted their initial report. It urged States which had not ratified or acceded to the Convention and its Optional Protocol to do so and called upon States parties to withdraw all reservations contrary to the purpose of the Convention.

48. Norway strongly supported the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women and the Stop Rape Now initiative. Effective measures must be taken to abandon harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation. Norway therefore welcomed the joint United Nations Population Fund-United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) programme to combat that practice and urged Member States to join in their efforts.

49. Norway welcomed the new targets set at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly under the Millennium Declaration, including full and productive employment and decent work for all, universal access to reproductive health care and universal treatment for HIV/AIDS.

50. The United Nations needed a stronger voice and more resources to make a difference for women on the ground. Norway was increasing its contributions to the existing gender mechanisms. It would also require the assistance of cooperation partners, Governments, international institutions and NGOs to ensure that increased focus on the advancement of women and gender equality led to real results.

51. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that her Government was aware of the crucial role played by women in economic and social development and had spared no efforts to work with civil society and non-governmental organizations to promote the advancement and safety of women. It had therefore adopted legal and administrative instruments to implement its commitments to promoting women's rights and the well-being of women. It had also ratified all the relevant international agreements concerning the elimination of discrimination against women. The Constitution guaranteed equality between men and women.

52. The President of Côte d'Ivoire had signed a solemn declaration on equal opportunities and gender equality, in which he made a commitment to ensuring that women filled at least 30 per cent public-administration and private-sector posts as well as political posts, particularly during elections, with a view to achieving gender parity as established in the Ivorian Constitution. Other measures included awareness-raising Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, training workshops in gender for local administrative and justice officials and meetings on peacebuilding in West Africa, women migrant workers and displaced persons in countries in conflict.

53. The Government had enacted legislation to combat violence against girls and women, including laws prohibiting female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and early or forced marriage. It had conducted awareness campaigns, strengthened its judicial system and established an early warning system to combat gender-based violence. Those measures could only succeed, however, in a climate of peace. His delegation therefore hoped that the Ouagadougou agreement would improve the situation of women in Côte d'Ivoire.

54. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino) said that, during its chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, between November 2006 and May 2007, San Marino had joined the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence. At the national level, it had adopted a number of measures. A professionally operated hotline had been launched to assist women victims of violence who sought legal, medical or psychological support. The Government had sponsored a TV spot about violence against women, and public debates had been organized at the local level to discuss the problem. The involvement of minors in domestic violence against women had also been addressed. On International Women's Day, the Government had organized several events on the advancement of women and violence against women, with contributions from women who were distinguished in their own fields. A review of the Criminal Code had also been undertaken and an assessment made of the steps to be taken in order to reach full gender equality and full respect for women's rights. The outcome of the Campaign activities had turned out unexpectedly useful in assessing the situation and setting the country on a new path to improve the situation of all women.

55. **Ms. Muñoz de la Peña** (Chile) said that her delegation endorsed the conclusions of the thematic debate on gender equality and the empowerment of women organized in March 2007. It reiterated its appreciation for the work done by the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. It reaffirmed its commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It therefore supported the transfer of the Secretariat of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and its proposed new working methods. Chile welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/143 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. It was committed to its implementation, including stricter penalties for violence against women and the provision of assistance to the victims of such violence. Her delegation noted the report of the Secretary-General on the same subject (A/62/201) and hoped that the Task Force on Violence against Women of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality would achieve its objective of initiating joint programming on violence against women in 10 pilot countries and elaborating guidelines on joint programming. It also supported the Secretary-General's global campaign on violence against women.

56. It was particularly concerned that MDG Goals 4 and 5 would not be achieved without increased national, regional and international efforts. It therefore welcomed the Global Business Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the World Health Organization Deliver Now Campaign. Her delegation supported reform of the gender architecture of the United Nations system and welcomed the appointment of a Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

57. Chile had taken steps at the national level to promote gender equality, including pension reform, preschool education, labour policy and other areas. Lastly, the inclusion of women's issues in national agendas was the best means of overcoming the invisibility of many women.

58. **Mr. Jeenbaev** (Kyrgyzstan) said that his Government was among the States which were fulfilling their obligations under the Beijing Platform for Action and had ratified more than 30 international human rights conventions and protocols. However, much more remained to be done to make the laws a reality. The Kyrgyz Constitution guaranteed equality between men and women and prohibited gender-based discrimination. The Government was taking steps to protect the rights of women and monitored progress towards achieving gender equality through gender-sensitive data collection which was updated every year. Analysis of those data informed the national gender policies, which sought to promote equal participation of men and women in decision-making positions, provide equal employment and business opportunities and health care protection, create an environment conducive to the active participation of men in childrearing and housekeeping and stop violence against women.

59. There were currently some 160 human rights and women's organizations operating in Kyrgyzstan. Almost 80 per cent of NGOs were headed by women. The Government had adopted a strategy for sustainable human development supported by the United Nations Development Programme, and national programmes were being conducted based on MDG 3. It also continued to enhance legislation to fulfil its international obligations in the area of gender equality and the advancement of women and had made considerable progress in improving their status. Women's issues would remain a top priority for Kyrgyzstan, and the Government would continue to build on its successes in that area.

60. **Mr. Loizaga** (Paraguay) said that more action should be taken on gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women at every level. Indicators reflecting the situation of women and practical recommendations for further action should be included in reports and documents issued by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women. United Nations entities should also use the outcomes of sessions of the Commission more effectively. His delegation supported the request by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for a further extension of its meeting time in order to reduce the backlog of reports awaiting consideration.

61. National and international efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women must be intensified. National capacities for data compilation, processing and dissemination must be strengthened so that the data could be used in national plans of action relating to violence against women. There should also be closer international cooperation on the establishment of women's shelters and training programmes. The challenges ahead remained daunting. States should, as a matter of urgency, undertake activities to improve the situation of rural women by training and raising the awareness of policymakers, community leaders and public officials. Rural women themselves, including indigenous women, should be consulted and their participation sought in the design, development and implementation of projects relating to gender equality and rural development. To that end, his delegation supported the adoption of an international day of rural women, in recognition of their economic contribution to the development of their communities.

62. The achievement of gender equality and respect for women depended on changing cultural attitudes. Unless a gender perspective was mainstreamed in national policies, with a full commitment to their implementation, their success would be limited. The establishment in Paraguay of the Women's Secretariat in 1992 had led to considerable success in gender-mainstreaming national policies, fighting for women's rights and working for amendments to civil, criminal, labour and electoral legislation. The Secretariat also prepared, implemented and monitored plans and programmes at local, national, and regional level. It provided advice on the establishment of women's organizations and worked for equality and non-discrimination at every level. Much remained to be done, but considerable progress had been made in promoting the human rights of Paraguayan women.

63. **Mr. Punkrasin** (Thailand) said that his Government had been working to achieve the target critical mass of 30 per cent women representatives in politics and to double the number of women in politics in Thailand. The Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development had engaged in activities to enhance awareness and encourage women's political participation in 75 provinces. Funds had been allocated to local women's organizations in every province, and a multisectoral subcommittee on women's participation in public life and administration, comprising academics, NGOs and the public sector, had organized

awareness-raising activities. Most importantly, the Election Commission had been persuaded to provide gender-disaggregated data on voters and successful and unsuccessful candidates. There was, however, a lack of specific information to support claims that increased participation by women would lead to greater effectiveness in administration. He therefore suggested that the United Nations should conduct a study on the impact of women's participation in decision-making. Only thus could Governments make informed decisions on the way forward or convince the general public of the importance of the issue.

64. One impediment to women's participation in decision-making was social attitudes towards women, but, unfortunately, the country's educational reform had not been specifically designed to change traditional attitudes. The reform principle had, however, adopted the learner-centred approach, which allowed for education to develop according to personal interests rather than stereotyped gender roles. Education had always been a priority for Thailand. The disparity between boys and girls in primary and secondary education had been eliminated, and the current goal was to achieve the same in tertiary education. Statistics from 1999 to 2001 indicated an increase in the number of female tertiary students in all fields, including some non-traditional ones, such as law, agriculture, forestry and fishery.

65. Women in rural areas contributed greatly to the country's social, economic and political development. Moreover, they were the repositories of traditional knowledge concerning the sustainable use of natural resources for food, medicine, textiles and energy. It was disappointing that, globally, the situation of rural women continued to deteriorate. In the belief that they should have the opportunity to generate remunerative non-agricultural employment, his Government had adopted such projects as the "Village and urban revolving fund", which provided villagers with loans to set up micro-businesses, and the "Village Bank", where credit loans were provided to men and women alike. Workshops were also being held to train and prepare women to be candidates in the forthcoming local elections.

66. His delegation remained committed to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Thailand had taken steps to harmonize national legislation with the provisions and principles of the Convention. It also continued to support the work of UNIFEM in Thailand and the East and South-East Asia region generally, including the regional forums that it had organized on men's role in ending violence against women and its activities to promote a better understanding of migrant workers.

67. **Ms. Salayeva** (Azerbaijan) said that rural women and girls in Azerbaijan largely faced the same challenges as those in other countries: low income and poverty, lack of adequate infrastructure and health care, limited access to education, early marriage and domestic violence. Such problems were accentuated by social stereotypes that impeded their overall development. The country's gender policy attached particular importance to the economic empowerment of women. Measures to increase economic opportunities for women, especially those living in rural areas, had been incorporated into all national development strategies.

68. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to launch a campaign to eliminate violence against women and girls, as set out in document A/62/201. She was pleased to inform the Committee that Azerbaijan's first national law on combating domestic violence had been drafted, with assistance from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the participation of national women's NGOs. In October 2006, the first national law on gender equality had been adopted and the State Committee for the family, women and children's affairs had been appointed to monitor its implementation and report annually to Parliament. One provision of the law was that national legislation should be scrutinized from the gender perspective. At the practical level, short- and medium-term measures to implement the new National Action Plan on family issues and gender equality were to be adopted.

69. Women and girls displaced as a result of the armed conflict with Armenia continued to suffer economic and social insecurity, as well as psychological trauma. The Government had adopted measures to improve the living conditions of refugees and internally displaced persons, provide access to education and health care and increase employment opportunities. National efforts should, however, be complemented by concerted action at international level. The needs and perspectives of women and girls affected by armed conflict must be mainstreamed into

international humanitarian and development projects and programmes.

70. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her country had prepared its second report on progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in which context it had strengthened the measures already in place. As a result of the attention thus devoted to women's issues in its five-year plans, both past and present, the gender gap had now diminished in such areas as basic education, non-agricultural occupations and membership of national legislative councils. The novelty of the current plan was that it incorporated mechanisms for measuring participation and for monitoring and evaluation in the light of international indicators and standards.

71. The Syrian Arab Republic had also submitted its first report on progress achieved in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and aired proposals for diminishing the obstacles faced in that connection. Moreover, as part of a newly instituted national plan to protect women from violence, a committee comprising governmental and non-governmental authorities and various experts had been formed to carry out activities aimed at fighting such violence through women's economic, political and cultural empowerment and exercise of their rights on an equal footing with men, as well as through examination of their responsibilities and obligations. Elaborated on the basis of findings from a poverty mapping project, a national scheme for poverty alleviation and the empowerment of women was also under way. A rural poverty map was being developed in addition, with particular focus on women, for whom literacy classes were provided in each of the country's 29 rural development centres.

72. Concerning women migrant workers, the recruitment and employment of all such workers was regulated in accordance with the relevant conventions on the subject, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, to which the Syrian Arab Republic had acceded in 2005. As for the Syrian women living under or displaced by the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan, they either received assistance through various special programmes in which the General Women's Union was actively involved or benefited from a law under which their home Government of the Syrian Arab Republic continued to pay salaries to school personnel. Indeed, the main challenge to ending the suffering of those women, including detainees in occupation prisons, and to achieving the empowerment of women in general, remained that of liberating the occupied Syrian Arab territories in the Golan and establishing a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of United Nations resolutions. It was similarly vital to banish the ongoing threat of aggression, the defence against which ate up resources that would otherwise be spent on development.

73. **Mr. Dall'Oglio** (International Organization for Migration) said that, while trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation was the most visible and prominent form of violence against women migrant workers, it was not the only one. Greater autonomy enjoyed by increasing numbers of women the world over meant that more women migrated independently of their families to pursue opportunities of their own; such women were still disproportionately affected by a variety of risks arising from their mobility. The crisis in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, for example, had brought to light the magnitude of the problems faced by women migrant workers as a result of unscrupulous recruitment mechanisms and exploitative labour practices. As many as half the 13,000 migrant workers evacuated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) — almost all employed as domestic workers — had irregular or undocumented status. Many instances of abuse, such as the withholding of passports, the breach of work contracts, the non-payment of salaries and the use of coercion, had been reported. Thus even women who avoided the trafficking networks were vulnerable working in gender-segregated sectors that were largely informal and unregulated. The risk was even greater for domestic workers, since their relative isolation further limited their access to health and social services or consular protection. Many women migrant workers also faced hazardous working conditions. Others were virtual prisoners in workshops, private homes or the dormitory-style housing provided by labour subcontracting companies. It was difficult for them to seek help, escape situations of exploitation and abuse or obtain legal redress. A recent IOM study in Cambodia had shown that female domestic workers were at high risk of being raped by male members of the household: as many as 10 per cent had been raped and up to 18 per cent had experienced attempted rape.

74. It was essential that policies on international migration should be gender-sensitive. Further action to reduce the vulnerability of women should be taken by informing migrant women workers of their rights in receiving countries; encouraging registration with consular authorities; training and appointing labour attachés to consulates who could advise and assist migrant women workers; promoting the adoption of human rights-based regulations for the employment of migrant workers, particularly women; ensuring that migrant workers had access to the same level of protection and safety at work as national workers; encouraging the recognition of qualifications between sending and receiving countries; campaigning for domestic workers' rights; monitoring the situation of women migrant workers in collaboration with State authorities and recruitment agencies; raising awareness of abusive practices among employers; and strengthening assistance networks in receiving countries. Breaking the cycle of violence against women, including women migrants, required active commitment by both State and non-State actors, including men and boys, and a change in attitude among families, communities and societies.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.